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WAR FOOD ADMINISTRATION
Office of Distribution

April 1944

FACT SHEET ON SHELL EGGS

The Problem

To increase consumption of shell eggs immediately and maintain consumption at a high level until May 15.

The Why

The present rate of production is the heaviest on record. Not only is the current season the flush production period for 1944, but the rate of lay per hen is greater than usual and the total production of eggs at present is about 80 percent larger than the 10-year average (1933-1942). Many other factors, including limited storage facilities, also contribute to the present abundance of eggs on farms.

Here is a food resource that any belligerent nation would be delighted to have. We don't want any of this food to go to waste. Consumers can prevent that by using more fresh eggs and by home storage.

Homemakers will be helping themselves and the whole war program by doing these things.

Background

American poultrymen have done an outstanding wartime job. Through their efforts, there has been no real shortage of poultry or poultry products -- and this in spite of the fact that eggs are one of the most important wartime foods. Expansion in egg production began in 1941. Official goals for egg production have been exceeded each successive war year thus far. And this year will be no exception, if present abundances are consumed. Production of eggs in 1943 reached nearly 5 billion dozen. This year it will exceed 5 billion dozen. Out of this total at least a billion and a half dozen will be needed for direct war uses -- one egg out of every four produced. Most of these will find their way to processing plants where they will be dried and sent overseas for use by our armed forces and by our allies and other friendly nations.

The remainder of 1944's tremendous production -- $3\frac{1}{2}$ billion dozen -- will be available for U. S. civilians. This is enough to supply each civilian with at least 350 eggs in 1944 -- more eggs than American civilians have ever had before in history.

Since this is the season of flush production, the major problem confronting the industry at present is one of using eggs fast enough. This year many factors stand in the way of normal handling of the supply that is rapidly building up. To begin with, the rate of production since December 15, has shown a marked increase over the same months a year ago.

Storage Facilities Short

The storage situation is a serious one. We have had record production of many foods. As a result, freezer and cooler spaces are full to a point approaching

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capacity with foods, like eggs, that must be stored for future civilian and wartime needs. There is storage room for some eggs, but not for all at the present rate of production.

Containers Limited

The packaging situation also is serious. Egg cases are scarce. New fiber and wooden cases are being made as fast as possible to help meet the demand, but there is a limit to the quantity of material available for the manufacture of cases and of the facilities to make them, because such materials and such facilities have many other uses in wartime.

Transportation Facilities Crowded

Transportation difficulties are at least as great as they were a year ago at this time, and the labor situation, what with the increased strength of our armed forces, has become more serious. This has affected all industry. So far as eggs are concerned, the results of reduced manpower are indicated through slower handling in regular commercial channels and by the inability of many egg-breaking and egg-drying plants to obtain the labor necessary to carry on operations at full capacity.

The most important immediate answer to the over-all problem apparently lies with civilians. Greater than normal use of eggs -- even at this season -- will do much to improve the present situation. It will help the producer in two ways -- first by supplying him with a market at present, and second, by encouraging him not to deplete his laying flocks below the level of last year. We want to be sure to have enough eggs during the latter part of this year and next. If the producer has to suffer heavy losses through not being able to find a market for his eggs now, he may so greatly reduce his laying flocks that an egg shortage would develop next winter and next year.

Eggs are one of our best protective foods and require no ration points. They take high honors among nutrition experts as a protective food in every diet. They are among the best of the body-building foods, supplying efficient protein in both white and yolk. Eggs also supply minerals such as iron, calcium, and phosphorus and the vitamins A, B₁, D, G, and the pellagra-preventive factor -- and it doesn't make any difference whether the housewife buys white eggs or brown eggs -- the same food value is in both. Eggs in some form should appear in family meals once or more every day, while they are plentiful.

Home Storage Simple

There are four simple ways to preserve eggs at home: by freezing, by dipping in mineral oil, by use of a solution of waterglass or sodium silicate (a clear liquid sold at drug stores), and by sealing them in glass fruit jars filled with carbon dioxide gas. This gas is given off by "dry ice."

Timing

Normally during Easter week there is a large consumption of eggs followed by the usual slump. This year it is necessary to maintain a high rate of egg consumption well into the month of May.

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